THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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The Church of Christ.

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The Church of Christ.

ITS CHARACTER, PURPOSE AND UNITY.

BY THE

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PREFACE.

A true view of the character and purpose of the Church of Christ necessitates a belief in organic unity.

That such unity is practicable is evident, seeing Christ desires it and the need of the world demands it.

These addresses are issued in this form, in response to several requests, with the prayer that the Holy Spirit may guide to a fuller realization of Christian unity and bless every true effort to that end.

T. A. W.

" The Church's one foundation
  Is Jesus Christ, her Lord ;
She is His new creation
  By water and the Word.
From heaven He came and sought her,
  To be His holy bride ;
With His own blood He bought her,
  And for her life He died.

Though with a scornful wonder
  Men see her sore oppress,
By schisms rent asunder,
  By heresies distrest,
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
  Their cry goes up, ' How long ?'
And soon the night of weeping
  Shall be the morn of song."

SAMUEL JOHN STONE.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

Ch. I.—The Church Militant . . . 9

Ch. II.—Christ's Teaching Regarding the Foundation, Development and Consummation of His Church 25

Ch. III.—Missions the Chief End of the Christian Church 37

Ch. IV.—Unity and Diversity of Gifts in the Church of Christ . . . 53

Ch. V.—Organic Union 65

The Church Militant.

"Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following."

—Ps. 48: 12, 13.

"This is the idea of the Church of Christ; men washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of God."

—F. W. Robertson.

CHAPTER I.

The Church Militant.

The fortifications and palaces of a country generally indicate its strength and wealth. So it is with the Church of Christ; if we wish to know her strength and wealth it will be necessary to go round about her marking well her bulwarks and considering her palaces. It takes longer to walk about Zion, longer to go round about her to-day, than in former years – her borders have greatly enlarged; her citadels are to be found in almost every land, whilst her palaces are the pride of every civilized nation. It requires, therefore, time, as well as constant and serious meditation, in order to com-

prehend somewhat of the greatness and beauty of Zion. A casual glance at the Church, or the once going round about her, will not suffice to impress upon the heart her power and magnificence; the mind must dwell upon her, and that not merely in a general way, but on the particular parts, such as the towers, the bulwarks and palaces.

We are exhorted to tell the towers. When we can, then we have become familiar with her majesty and the extent of her conquests. The towers point to heaven's purity, peace, glory and perfection. Let man know in how many ways the Church of Christ directs him to that which is noblest and best. Count the number of the watchmen upon the towers of Zion and know that they are sorely grieved when there are signs of spiritual decline and when sin

gains the ascendency; but know also that they have a joy that is unspeakable when Zion prospers and when she is mighty in conquest.

God has raised up from time to time men who have become leaders in the Church; these are to be found in our colleges and in the various religious communities. Such leaders in religious thought and Christian activity, because of their intimate fellowship with God, and because of their eager, constant and broad outlook upon the world, are worthy of confidence and support; for, seeing the dangers to which the Church is exposed, they sound the alarm; seeing the need of the world, they cry: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion"; seeing the Church's great opportunities, they urge with sympathetic appeal: Be up and doing, "While it is called to-day."

A more intelligent and sympathetic interest on the part of Christians, in the Church's wise and unselfish leaders of the past and present, would result in more wholehearted and courageous service for the Master. Watchman, what of the night?

Mark ye well her bulwarks, so that each and every one may be assured of the foundations on which she rests and the strength of her defence.

Christ's presence in the Church is her greatest bulwark, her surest hope. He ever walks amidst "the seven golden candle-sticks" to awaken interest and to give strength and permanency to her every effort. Does not the fact, that the all-conquering Christ dwells in His Church in the person of the Holy Spirit, mean that she must sooner or later subdue the nations of the earth? "All power

is given unto me," and "Lo, I am with you always," were the parting promises of Christ.

His presence in His Church implies that she shall stand fast and be a refuge and strength to all who are truly identified with her. They shall be safe in Zion, for "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her."

Holy lives are also an important bulwark of the Christian Church. Many arguments have been set forth in defence of Christianity; some of them have been refuted, but the argument of a consistent and holy life, no one has been able to gainsay. The Church can add name after name to the list of honored and faithful servants, as given in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews; names of those who had the mind of Christ and walked in His footsteps. Every honest confession added to the whole-hearted

confession of Peter—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—is so much additional strength to the Church, for has not Christ said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock (your confession) will I build my Church." The outcome of such confessions has been devotion to Christ and holiness of life; thus the united testimony of Christians by honest confession and holy living has been and is still one of the Church's strongest and surest means of defence.

No less important a bulwark are the "great and precious promises which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus." What God has promised of blessing and prosperity to His Church He will fulfil. Does this not then become at once her strength and her encouragement?

When we come to consider her

palaces, we find that there is nothing mean or insignificant about Zion. She is grand and gorgeous. No loss or damage has come to her through all these years, nor has her beauty or symmetry been marred by the frequent attacks that have been made upon her. Christ's presence accounts for her unsurpassed beauty and constant glory. He casts the mantle of charity over the inconsistencies, and yet constantly ministers to their sanctification, thus continually increasing the beauty and glory of His Church.

As regards her wealth and resources she can boast of a plentiful supply for the present, and of hidden and sufficient treasures for the days that are to come. She is rich in gifts, in talents, in endowments, in grace and love, in courage and wisdom; for the Church has her scholars

and sages, her poets and preachers, her teachers and evangelists, her musicians and martyrs, her pious people and her self-sacrificing workers.

A Church of such a character, and with such endowments, must surely have a great purpose; in fact Christ could not bring into existence a Church that would have a narrow or insignificant purpose. Nothing short of the subduing of the nations of the earth will suffice as a purpose, and she must steadily pursue it until "Christ shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth."

How shall she fulfil her great purpose? By truly honoring the Holy Spirit. The children of Israel, under Joshua, were commanded to allow the Ark, the symbol of God's presence, to precede them by two thousand cubits; so the Holy Spirit must

be given a place of honor and not be identified with conscience or thought of merely as a religious influence.

This constant and unerring Guide will reveal the purpose of God and will enlighten the Church in her times of doubt and perplexity, as well as inspire her with hope and courage when she is about to falter. When she honors the Holy Spirit then she shall "go in and possess the land," for it is "not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

She shall fulfil her purpose also by a faithful setting forth of the Word, the Sword of the Spirit, in precept and by practice. When Gideon and his faithful three hundred marched against the Midianites, they took with them trumpets and lamps; the former symbolical of the preaching of the Word—the declaring of the

whole counsel of God—the lifting up of the crucified Saviour. She has sought not only "to keep the faith once delivered to the saints," but to publish it abroad. In so doing she has conquered. The lamps, on the other hand, are symbolical of pure and holy lives—"Let your light so shine" has been the watchword of the Church, with the result that God has been glorified. The proclaiming of the Truth from the sacred desk and the practicing of it in daily life will ever be the Church's most effective mode of conquest. To the weapons of truth are added those of meekness and righteousness by the Psalmist, for he says, — "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and majesty and in thy majesty, ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness." These are her wea-

pons for aggressive warfare. The powers of darkness must give way before her, for "she goes forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners."

The triumphs and conquests of the past have cost much. Many noble lives have been sacrificed in the cause of truth and righteousness. History records that between four and seven million in the early centuries sealed their testimony to Christ's redeeming power with their life blood, and that during the Reformation in Scotland some eighteen thousand died the death of the martyr rather than deny their Lord and Master. Besides, we recall with a certain degree of pride such names as Livingstone of Africa, the Gordons of Erromanga, as well as the long list of heroic missionaries and native Christians in China who have

been faithful unto death. To what end is all this sacrifice? We have a concise answer in the language of the writer who says, "We see through the tears and the trials the triumphs of the cross."

Zion's strength, triumphs, and glory are to be told to the generation following. Once the mind has comprehended her greatness and her purpose, when the mind is filled with admiration for her and the heart is wholly devoted to her cause, then it will be possible to impress upon the rising generation her importance and the world-wide extent of her mission. Tell it to the generation following that they may do nothing to weaken her, and may not in any sense allow her to be surrendered to the enemy, but that they may espouse her interests. Belittle the Church of Christ and the rising gen-

eration will soon be unwilling to be identified with her; exalt her and they will deem it an honor to serve in her ranks. Yea, they will thus be led to devote their best energies and effort to promote her interests — to "lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes."

No one is ashamed to be called a Briton, because he knows he is identified with a nation of strength, of prestige and of vast resources. Why should anyone be ashamed to be identified with the Church of Christ? She is rich in Grace, strong in Love, fortified by the Divine presence, with a wonderful history of conquest and victory, as well as before her a future of world-wide blessing and eternal glory, for Christ has assured us that His shall finally be "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

He who has faith in Christ will have faith in His Church, and all who have love for our Lord Jesus will pray "that Jerusalem may have peace and prosperity," and can truly say with Timothy Dwight: —

"I love Thy Kingdom, Lord,
The house of Thine abode,
The Church our blest Redeemer saved
With His Own precious blood.

For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given
Till cares and toils shall end.

Sure as Thy truth shall last,
To Zion shall be given
The brightest glories earth can yield,
And brighter bliss in heaven."

Christ's Teaching Regarding the Foundation, Development and Consummation of His Church.

"And He spake many things unto them in parables, saying," &c.

—Matt. 13: 3.

"The Kingdom of God for any soul is that condition, anywhere in the universe, where God is that soul's king, where it seeks and obeys the highest, where it loves truth and duty more than comfort and luxury."

—Phillips Brooks.

CHAPTER II.

Christ's Teaching Regarding the Foundation, Development and Consummation of His Church.

In the parables on the Kingdom there are set forth various aspects of the Church of Christ from its establishment to its consummation.

In the parables of "The Sower" and "The Tares" Christ teaches the place and importance of truth in His Church. Is it not when the truth gains access to the heart, when it is heard in faith, that the Kingdom of Christ begins in such a heart? The Church then has a sacred trust, in that she must scatter broadcast the precious seed provided—scatter

it in faith, not knowing where it will take root. Who can estimate the power of the Word of God? "It is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." No words of man's wisdom or effervescent eloquence will suffice, for Christ is honored and the best interests of His Church served when the truth is highly prized and when it is wisely and freely used.

These two parables also sum up the hindrances to the development of the Church. They are of two kinds: those from within, in the hearts of men, and those from without—"An enemy hath done this."

As regards the former, they are very prevalent and powerful. They

may be characterized as the hardened heart, the superficial heart and the pre-possessed heart. So strong and so persistent are these hindrances that nothing but the Holy Spirit can make the necessary preparation, in order that the truth may be received into good and honest hearts and bring forth fruit abundantly.

Much of the evil existing in the Church to-day is accounted for when it is said, "An enemy hath done this." How does it come that there are those identified with the Church who have a name to live but are dead? "An enemy hath done this." Whence the erroneous doctrines in the Church from time to time? We answer again, "An enemy hath done this."

How account for division, strife and discord within the ranks of the

Church? "An enemy hath done this" also. Satan's efforts to check the growth and minimize the influence and fruitfulness of the Church are persistent, subtle and far-reaching. When the mischief is once done, however, patience is the virtue much needed, for both the wheat and tares must grow together until the harvest.

In the parables of "The Mustard Seed" and "The Leaven" we have clearly set forth the extent and the nature of the development of the Church of Christ.

Christians are not to be discouraged by hindrances from within or from without, for the development of the Kingdom will be rapid and remarkable. Has it not been so? As a result of the preaching of Peter, we are told that three thousand souls were added to the Church

in one day. In the middle of the second century we have the following testimony of Justin Martyr to the further rapid development of Christianity, when he wrote: "There is no people, Greek or barbarian, or of any other race, however ignorant of arts or of agriculture, whether they dwell in tents or wander about in covered wagons, among whom prayers and thanksgiving are not offered in the name of the crucified Saviour to the Father and Creator of all things."

About half a century later we have a similar testimony from Tertullian, who says: "We are but of yesterday, and yet we already fill your cities, islands, camps, your palaces, senate, forum; we have left to you only your temples."

Sufficient data can also be given to show the remarkable development

in recent years. For instance, in China fifty years ago, it is estimated that there were only three hundred Christians, in 1890 some forty thousand, whilst in 1900 there were as many as one hundred and thirteen thousand. When we consider that nearly every convert becomes a centre of Christian influence, we may know how quickly the leaven of gospel principles will spread till all shall know Christ.

Whilst the parable of "The Leaven" illustrates the secret but certain working of the Grace of God, the parable of the "Mustard Seed" points to the truth that there are given to the Church unmistakeable manifestations of her steady and symmetrical growth.

The Church of to-day is not a weakling that needs to be supported by argument and apology. Instead

of requiring the support of men, it invites them to come under its shelter to enjoy its protection. "Come thou with us," she says, "and we shall do thee good."

In the parables of "The Hidden Treasure" and "The Pearl of Great Price" Christ indicates the different attitude of individuals towards His Grace offered through the Church. She carries the Grace of God to men. In this sense they find it without search, for who would expect the heathen to go on a pilgrimage to a Christian land in search of the Grace they so much need? But when it is taken to them and when by faith they appropriate it to themselves, they truly rejoice in the treasure they possess.

Still it is also true that many, having heard of Christ and His Grace, earnestly and diligently seek the

Pearl of Great Price. It is not to them an unexpected and somewhat sudden find, but after careful self-examination, after prayerful study of God's Word, after much conscientious reasoning, and it may be after a long season of doubt, they find the object of their search.

In both instances, however, the treasure is invaluable; so precious that neither hesitates "to sell all that he hath" in order to possess it.

It leads us to ask, what does the Church offer to men? A treasure, a possession, a pearl! Yes, she offers them grace, love and pardon; she offers them Christ, the unspeakable gift; she offers holiness of character; she offers to men restoration to the glorious image which they have lost.

On the other hand, what does she ask them to part with? Their pride

of heart; their love of self and worldly possessions; in a word, all they have.

What, then, is the principle Christ has given to His Church? It is this: When men are brought to know the value of the treasure which she offers they will willingly give up the paltry possessions of the world. Such satisfaction is found in the possessing of the "Pearl of Great Price," that hearts have been constrained to say:

"Jesus, thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou fount of life, thou light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again."

One more parable is required to complete this series on the Kingdom. Whilst the six already referred to naturally group themselves in pairs, this one stands out conspicuously to reveal the final consummation of His Kingdom, for the encour-

agement of all who are identified with it.

The Church of the future, we are assured, will be wholly free from evil in every form, and shall be composed of those who have been separated unto God. Being wholly purified in herself and free from all contamination from without, she shall be exalted to a place of honor and enter upon her eternal mission. What a Church! Every faculty, every gift, every heart wholly consecrated to God and devoted to His service; every member in perfect unison with every other member; an innumerable company gathered from all quarters—from the North and from the South, from the East and from the West; no seasons of decline or periods of indifference or doubt; she shall dwell in the pure light of Heaven, possessing a con-

stancy and holiness of character that shall know no change.

"When shall these things be?" asked the disciples. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has kept in His own hands," is the gentle rebuke of Christ; but, what is more important at present, "Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

The Church of Christ, then, can only be truly established, developed and consummated when the Holy Ghost is received and when the power bestowed is used in witnessing for Christ in the world. This is her present concern, so we pray:—

"O make Thy Church, dear Saviour,
A lamp of burnished gold,
To bear before the nations
Thy true light as of old."

Thus, as we pray "Thy Kingdom come," let every one who has named the name of Christ respond to the command, "Go work to-day in my vineyard," for he who has a share in the planting and the developing shall have a share in the glorious consummation forever and ever.

Missions the Chief End of the Christian Church.

"God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations."

—Ps. 67: 1, 2.

"Whenever any Church has ceased to be missionary, it has ceased to be healthy."

—Bishop Boyd Carpenter.

CHAPTER III.

Missions the Chief End of the Christian Church.

Worshipping and witnessing are the two important functions of the Christian Church. Worshipping, however, is not an end in itself; it implies that blessing is received, not for any selfish use, but for a divine and noble purpose, as is taught by the Spirit speaking in the words of the Psalmist: "God be merciful unto us and bless us and cause His face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."

God bless us. Why? "That thy name may be known among all nations." True waiting upon God has

always in view the working amongst men. A people that have God's mercy extended unto them and have God's blessing bestowed are rich and are splendidly equipped for world-wide service. There is then a close connection between waiting upon God and witnessing for Him.

It is true that our spiritual growth depends on the truth and blessing we receive, but exercise is necessary for health of soul. It matters not how nourishing the food may be that is consumed from day to day, if proper exercise is not taken health of body will not be possessed or enjoyed.

Further, we may say that the larger the sphere for exercise the greater is the strength and vitality that will ensue. The child in a densely populated city, confined within narrow limits, has little oppor-

tunity for the proper development of the faculties of the body, but must necessarily grow up weak and puny. Not so with the youth in the country - abundance of fresh air, ample liberty to romp and play. The extent of his privilege and the proper use of it, is his strength. Christ has made due provision for the exercise of the Christian faculties. Most Christians receive plentifully of the truth; yea, they have been led into the green pastures of God's grace and promises, but many of them are not strong. Why? Because, like Ruskin's audiences, they come to hear what is said and how it is said, but never think of putting it into practice. They are not strong, then, simply from the want of healthy exercise that comes from Christian activity and zealous endeavor. Many have confined their efforts within too

narrow bounds and their spiritual life has developed accordingly.

The field for Christian activity, says Christ, is the world. When the Christian's faith, love, sympathy and effort extends to the end of the world, his own soul becomes strong, and Christ is truly honored.

The greater the task undertaken and successfully accomplished, the greater the character and the stronger is the heart that has performed. Has not Christ given His Church the arduous task of evangelizing the world, that in the performance of it she might develop a strong and noble character, and thus be "made meet for the Master's use." If a smaller task had been assigned her, many of her best and noblest qualities would lie dormant and would soon be useless; the greatness of the work calls for the best she

has, and at the same time tends to strengthen her weaker qualities. Is the Church using the wisdom, the sympathy and the power she possesses? Is she directing it into right and proper channels for the salvation of a lost world? We believe, speaking generally, that the Church has taken up her world-wide mission, but here and there may be found portions of the Church—individual congregations—that see little beyond their own requirements. By prejudice and narrow-mindedness the world's spiritual needs have been shut out from their vision and they are content to live in a narrow sphere, if indeed it can be said that such truly live at all. The field is the world; "Lift up your eyes and behold, for the fields are white already to harvest". No narrower outlook will suffice; Christ would not have

it so. His teaching in this regard is clear, when he says: "Ye are the light of *the world*"; "Ye are the salt of *the earth*"; "Go ye into all *the world*"; "Teach *all nations*." Further he says: "Ye shall be witnesses of me, beginning at Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and unto *the uttermost parts of the earth*."

Such were the declarations of Christ to His first disciples regarding the Church's sphere of activity, and there is nothing to show that His purpose has changed.

History proves to us that when the Church has earnestly sought to obey Christ's final command, "Go ye into all the world," she has prospered and flourished, but when she lost sight of this end she became weak.

The one outstanding feature of the Apostolic Church is its mission-

ary zeal; the Church at Antioch may be singled out to indicate the character of the early Church in general. It is said of the Christians at Antioch, that the hand of the Lord was upon them; they clave unto God; many were added to their number, and every man gave according to his ability. These are unmistakeable indications of a growing and vigorous Church.

During the middle ages the Church, instead of enlarging her borders and extending the hand of Christian sympathy to the nations beyond, spent her time and energy, history informs us, in theological contentions and in the observance of rights and practices, which were unscriptural. Her light became dim. The Waldensians and Albigenses remained true and faithful witnesses, but the light that emanated from these portions of the

Church was more than counteracted by the prevalence of superstition and idolatry in other parts. Thus, as the Church became self-centred, she lost much of the light and life she once possessed.

When it could be said of Murray McCheyne's congregation that it was missionary, then it was rich in blessing and strong for service. Both scripture and history affirm that the more light the Church gives the more she possesses. To this Augustine testifies, when he said: "Whatever is possessed and not used is not possessed as it ought to be possessed." "Freely ye have received," says Christ, "freely give."

Is not much of the Church's spiritual strength, like the power of Niagara, going to waste?

In recent years the power of Niagara is being transmitted to distant

towns and cities, thus providing sufficient light in the home and on the public highway. In answer to the prayer of God's people—"God be merciful to us and bless us and cause thy face to shine upon us"—there has been given power to the Church. Is it not at once her duty and privilege to transmit it to distant nations that are sitting in darkness—to transmit it along the wires of faith so that the homes and the public thoroughfares of these great nations might be lighted with the love that is divine, so that they may "walk in the light even as God is in the light"?

The strength of the Church's mission will be determined by the abundance of life and the strength of Christian sympathy in those centres where gospel privileges have been longest enjoyed and where God's blessing has been the richest. For

even as the beat of the heart determines the health of the finger to its extremity, so the heart-beat of the Christian Church will determine the health of her remotest member.

We are accustomed to speak of "Home" and "Foreign" Missions. These terms are necessary, it is true, as a guide for the wise distribution of the Church's gifts of liberality, but they are misused when one Christian thinks he can give his whole attention to the work at home and set wholly aside the claims of the heathen world; whilst another, it may be, is devoted to the converting of the heathen and is out of sympathy with the less romantic, yet necessary, work pertaining to the maintaining of ordinances at home. The work is one; the field is one; both "Home" and "Foreign" Missions claim the sympathy of every Christian heart. In

fact it is difficult to understand how any one can truly call themselves a Christian and not have a share in the Church's specific purpose, viz: "That Christ's way may be known upon earth, His saving health among all nations." When Christ comes to the heart, He brings with Him His missionary zeal and enthusiasm. This He imparts to the believer, so that he in turn comes to have a sympathetic, compassionate and broad outlook upon the world; at the same time he will seek to help the needy and rescue the perishing, whom he finds in the more immediate sphere in which his lot is cast.

The Church will be of the same character as her individual members. When, as in apostolic times, every one who names the name of Christ is a missionary, then the Church shall truly honor her Head and shall

make her influence felt wherever her banner is unfurled.

The "World for Christ" is the only worthy motto for the Church who seeks to do her Master's will.

She has, then, two important functions which, we have seen, are inseparable. In Heber, the hymn-writer, we find these two functions of worshipping and witnessing blending in wondrous harmony, in that he has penned for us the hymn of adoration, "Holy, Holy, Holy," which is accorded a foremost place; as well as the favorite missionary hymn, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains."

All who possess his spirit, which we believe was a counterpart of the mind of Christ—all who possess his spirit will unite with him in the prayer of adoration—"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty"—as well as in the missionary plea:

"Waft, waft, ye winds, the story,
And you ye waters roll,
Till like a sea of glory
It spreads from pole to pole;
Till o'er our ransomed nature,
The Lamb, for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign."

Unity and Diversity of Gifts in the Church of Christ.

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

—Rom. 12: 4, 5.

"An organ is composed of several in struments—the choir, the swell, the pedal, the great; and many stops—the diapason, the flute, the trumpet; and yet it is one. And the Church of Christ is one. One spirit, one breath of wind, turned on by the living hand, makes all the organ vocal."

—J. Morse.

CHAPTER IV.

Unity and Diversity of Gifts in the Church of Christ.

God metes out His gifts according to the grace each one is given to possess. These gifts are numerous and widely distributed; so much so that no one has a monopoly, nor is there any reason why one with larger gifts should depreciate the one possessing a lesser gift, seeing both are alike dependent upon God, "The bountiful giver of every good and every perfect gift."

By means of the apt illustration of the body, the Apostle shows the diversity of gifts possessed by, and the unity existing in, the Church of Christ. Every member has its par-

ticular place and its particular office. If any member fails to perform its function it remains unperformed, for the eye cannot hear for the ear, nor the ear see for the eye. How necessary then that each member of Christ's Church be sensible of the particular and definite responsibility that has been assigned him, and be grateful for the honor conferred, in that he has a work to do which he alone can perform. Thus each member has an individuality of his own, which requires to be retained and developed. All can best do the work God has assigned them when they do it in their own way and not in imitation of some one else. It was not intended, then, that all Christians should do the very same work, or that they should do it in the same way. The more truly the individuality is developed and enters

into Christian service the more is Christ honored and His cause advanced. Nor should any Christian expect others to work according to his plan and in his particular way. As well might the eye expect the ear to hear after the fashion in which it sees, as for a member of the Church of Christ to think that no work is properly performed that is not carried out according to his plan of service.

The conspicuousness of any member of the body does not determine its importance. The reeds of the musical instrument, though hidden, are indispensable and are quite as important as the key-board, which is exposed to view. Some members of the Body of Christ have been assigned a more conspicuous place than others, but no member need say, "because I am not continu-

ally before the public eye, I need not be diligent and faithful." The being much seen or seldom seen should not determine the faithfulness of any Christian, but rather the fact that the work is assigned him by Christ and that He is honored when it is wisely and diligently performed.

Not only is Christ dishonored when any member is remiss, but every other member is affected to a greater or less degree; such is the unity and such the dependence of one upon the other.

Further, the members can only perform their function when they are governed by the head, and respond readily to its bidding. So in the Body of Christ. The Will of Christ must control every member and their every action. Nothing, then, short of entire self-surrender will suffice in order that Christ's Will

may be done. Thus diversity of gifts and individuality is compatible with united and harmonious effort. When is one member of Christ's Church out of harmony with one or more members? When he is out of harmony with Christ; asserting his own will instead of doing the Master's. The life of the body is one. The same life animates every part. This is the principle that gives constant and vital unity to the Body of Christ. Can we grasp the significance of such a truth? The life of Christ, rich and strong, possessing the heart of every member, the same life flowing to all members, animating and enriching each and every one, giving power to perform that which Christ's Will directs. Besides, the gifts possessed would be of little avail without the life to animate them. The unity of the Church,

then, is a vital one. To be a part of the Church, Christ's life must be possessed; then it is that we have a living union, not only with Christ the Head, but with every member.

Time and distance cannot destroy this unity. All Christians of all creeds and nationalities are united by this one life in one harmonious whole. The life that is possessed is the principal thing; gifts and individuality are secondary, so that Christians can rejoice together in the possession of a common spiritual life. How rich is the life Christ imparts to His Church? He truly is her Life—not merely in the midst of her, as it were, separate from, guiding and directing her affairs, but the very life and strength of His Church.

By worldliness or indifference on the part of some members, the flow

of that life is checked, and not only does the one member suffer from the want of true vitality, but the other members suffer also, seeing all are united, and one member's sin hinders Christ's blessing in its fulness reaching the hearts of others.

On the other hand, when any portion of the Church suffers for the sake of Christ, every other part is in sympathy, showing us that there is an invisible yet real bond that unites Christendom.

We find, then, in the Church of Christ, unity in diversity and diversity in unity.

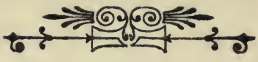
No mere external difference should be allowed to interfere with the true life and unity of the Church. All denominational preferences are insignificant, compared with the essential life of the Church, and must, we think, sooner or later be adjusted

so as to adequately reflect the unity of life within. Diversity points us to the fact that God has a special interest in the development of each Christian, as well as in the service he renders. Though he may seem insignificant in his own eyes, God takes note of and accepts the service of the individual. He expects no more than that each shall fill his place and render suitable and faithful service.

Unity implies that this faithful service will be rendered, that His Will will be done. Nor is it necessary that the whole of this Will be revealed or known at one time in order that it may be carried out. In the erecting of an edifice, each workman is assigned his particular portion with definite instructions, but the whole plan of the architect need not be made known to him.

As each man faithfully performs his task the edifice rises in due proportions and symmetry, so that the architect's plan becomes a reality.

The great Body of Christ, with all its diversity, has all its faculties united in the carrying out of a noble and divine purpose, in the performing of the service for which she exists, viz: the evangelizing of the world. Christ's purpose shall fully be revealed when each has performed the task assigned them, and that in the way Christ has directed. When the task has been completed, Christ and His servants shall rejoice together, for shall He not say: "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."



Organic Union.

"There shall be one flock and one shepherd."

John 10: 16.

"In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."

CHAPTER V.

Organic Union.

Unity is an essential of the Church; the unity that comes from the presence of the one Spirit and the possession of the one life should, we believe, find adequate expression and should be not merely a truth to be meditated on, but a fact to be clearly demonstrated.

It cannot be said at the present time that the spiritual unity of the Church is adequately expressed, seeing that some say "I am of Paul," and others "I am of Apollos." The more real the invisible unity bebecomes, the more inconsistent are outward differences.

The importance of organic union

lies in the fact that it has to do with practical issues. In order to solve this problem practical difficulties require to be dealt with. These difficulties, says the late Hugh Price Hughes, cannot be escaped by arguing that the Church is an invisible body. Further he says: "We hold as strongly as any that Christ came into this world, not merely and not mainly to save individual men, but to establish a Church, and the Church He established is obviously a visible Church. Baptism, the Sacrament of initiation, cannot be administered by or to an invisible Church. The Holy Communion, the perpetually renewed Sacrament of membership, is equally inapplicable to an invisible Church. We repudiate the modern dangerous delusion that religion is simply a matter between a man and his Maker. The Christian

religion has at every stage relation to our fellow-men as to our God and Saviour. The highest and richest blessings of personal sanctification are offered not to the individual who isolates himself, but to the Christian Church."

As long as the present differences of government and doctrine exist, organic union, we may safely say, will be impossible. The question is not, how much do denominational differences aid in the effective working of the Church, but, rather, are such differences in keeping with the mind of Christ? He assures us that "there shall be one flock and one shepherd." His mind is clearly expressed in the earnest prayer offered for the disciples: "I pray for them which thou hast given me; neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me

through their word. That they all may be one, as Thou Father art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Does not Christ here refer to the invisible spiritual unity and also to the outward manifestation of it, without which unity would not be perfect?

And note why Christ so earnestly desires this unity—"that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." How much of the unbelief of to-day, we ask, is due to the want of organic union, the want of harmonious cooperation on the part of God's people? The end of true unity is that the world may believe that Christ has been sent to save. The world's conception of Christianity will be formed by the outward manifestation of it; how necessary then that visible

unity be strong and as perfect as possible. Unity already prevails to a certain degree. One aspect of it is to be found in the Hymnology, which is common to all evangelical denominations. Each has made a suitable collection of hymns, gleaned from the past and present, from the productions of Latin, Greek, German and English authors, and that without respect of denomination. The hymns have been chosen on their merits, with a result that the majority of hymns used by the different denominations are the same. In looking over the list of authors in the various denominational hymnals, we find such names as Heber, an Episcopalian; Watts, a Congregationalist; Wesley, a Methodist; Bonar, a Presbyterian. No hymn-book would be complete without Heber's "Holy, Holy, Holy," Wesley's "Jesus, Lover

of My Soul," and Toplady's "Rock of Ages."

It is interesting as well as encouraging to briefly sum up the recent movements and present-day tendencies in the direction of organic union.

Such for instance as the union of the various branches of the Presbyterian church in Canada, as well as the similar union among the Methodists. The marked and substantial progress which has been made by these denominations since each became a united body is proof that the step was a right one, and that much gain and not loss has come to the Church as a whole.

The recent union of the "U. P." and Free Churches in Scotland is also worthy of notice. It is already bearing fruit and is demonstrating the truth of the familiar adage, "Union is strength."

The Federation of the Free Churches in England, including over eight million Nonconformists, has exercised a great influence, having brought together into more intimate fellowship and for a more united effort the somewhat isolated and scattered denominations. This Federation has accomplished much through the catechism which it has issued, some 350,000 copies of which are in use; also by an aggressive evangelism; by social reform in South London; by the establishing of Girls' Guilds; as well as by endeavoring to secure equal rights in education.

The world-wide Christian Endeavor movement has shown us that Christians of all denominations can work side by side in a common cause. It has at least lowered the walls of separation that have kept God's people apart. By emphasizing the pur-

pose which should predominate in Christian service, viz: "For Christ and the Church," this organization has led us to centre our minds on the great essentials, and to some extent has shown how insignificant are some of the denominational contentions.

Added to this we have the united effort in Bible Society work, indicating that there is a common faith in the Word of God, in its teaching regarding sin and salvation, and also a common desire that men everywhere should possess the scriptures in their own language, and through them be brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The "International Course of Sabbath School Lessons" have played no small part in creating a desire for closer union and a more united cooperation. Besides, S. S. Conven-

tions have brought out into bold relief the essentials of Christian activity and have minimized denominational distinctions.

Not less important is the influence which has been exerted by the Y. M. C. A. Little did Mr. Williams think, when he gathered together a few young men in a room in the warehouse in St. Paul's churchyard, London, in 1844, that he was inaugurating a movement that would bring together the various denominations in a common effort to strengthen physically and spiritually the young men of the land.

Amongst other forces and tendencies at work may be noticed the reciprocal interchange of good-will in Church courts; the work of the Evangelical Alliance; the recent "Missionary Conference" in New York; the work of the "Lord's Day

Alliance" and Ministerial Associations; the movement to combine, if possible, the Methodist and Presbyterian missionary effort in the great West of Canada; the proposed practical federation of Protestant Churches in Australia; the union of several branches of the Presbyterian Church, about to be effected, in the United States; the "Canadian Society of Christian Unity," and many kindred societies, as well as the "Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral," which outlines a basis of union.

These are but signs of the times, indicating the strength of the desire for more extended union, at the same time proving that such union is practical.

The fact that a strong desire is manifest is not in itself sufficient to justify the removing of old landmarks and the establishing of a new order

of things. But two considerations at least make organic union a necessity—Christ desires it and the need of the world demands it. That Christ desires it is clear, as we have already pointed out, when He prayed "That they all might be one." That the need of the world demands it is evident. The Church cannot afford to waste any of her time or energy in weakening her fortresses, seeing a lost world is to be reclaimed, and that speedily. It is the greatness of her mission that must lead her to unite her forces. The more earnest and zealous the Church has been in seeking after the lost, the less ado has she made about denominational rights and preferences.

But, we ask, is it possible? If it is an absolute necessity, it must be possible. The Holy Spirit will guide to the proper solution, and we ven-

ture to say the basis of union will be simple rather than elaborate; including belief in the Bible as the revealed Word; in the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as well as in the fundamental doctrines regarding God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, man's sin, and the salvation provided.

As regards belief in the "Historical Episcopacy," which the "Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral" sets forth as an essential for union, we can see no reason why it should have a place in the basis of union. Professor Symonds, in his treatise on "Christian Unity," points out that Episcopacy was introduced in the early centuries under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, being the necessary development for the proper government of the Church. If this be admitted then, that which is distinctive in

each denomination can be accounted for in the same way, and the basis of union would require to include the outstanding feature of each division of the Church of Christ. That would make union impossible and impracticable. Should not the basis of union include the principles inculcated by Christ and the Apostles, rather than the varied historical developments?

Within the precincts of one denomination we find a great variety of opinions and beliefs, so there seems to be no reason why a union based on the great essentials of Christianity could not allow sufficient liberty on matters of secondary importance, thus putting into practice the ancient but familiar rule: "In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity."

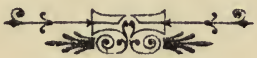
The advantages of such a union

are obvious. There would be the bringing together the best in each denomination—the dignity of the Episcopalians, the stability of the Presbyterians, the zeal of the Methodists, the liberty of the Congregationalists, as well as the distinct features of other Protestant bodies.

A wider and more comprehensive policy would be possible. At present one denomination plans to a great extent independent of the others, with the result that the same ground is covered twice over, while new territory is unbroken and neglected. There would also result a more exalted conception of the Church. A large and united body gives impetus and heart to the several parts. To many the Church is nothing more than their particular denomination, whereas the Church as it exists on the earth to-day com-

prises an extensive brotherhood, including all isms that are truly evangelical.

In John's vision he sees the New Jerusalem—the City of God—a perfect society of believers, united in true fellowship and in exalted service. Should not the Church on earth reflect somewhat more of Heaven's harmony and unity? Many earnest hearts pray that she may, and cherish the hope that ere long she will.



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